

Department of Veterans Affairs
Pharmacy Benefit Management
VA Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy (CMOP)

Aug. 31, 2005

Subject: Delivery of outpatient prescription medications following a significant weather event.

1. The Department of Veterans Affairs currently dispenses roughly 80 percent of all prescriptions through the Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy program. The VA CMOP program primarily uses the U.S. Postal Service for delivery of 95 percent of the estimated 45 million packages shipped annually. The delivery of the CMOP packages is essential for the seamless provision of care and significant weather events such as hurricanes and major snowstorms can disrupt the delivery of mails. The VA CMOP and the VA facilities impacted by significant weather events will work cooperatively in partnership with the USPS, as well as other package delivery contractors such as FedEx and United Parcel Service to assure the impact on patient care is minimized as much as possible.
2. The general plan of action in areas impacted by a significant weather event is outlined below:
 - Local post offices will hold mails (including packages) for addressees impacted by the weather event (i.e. damaged or destroyed location). Patients may pick the packages up at that local post office for up to 10 to 14 days.
 - Local post offices will return packages held for pickup after 10 to 14 days to the return addresses on those packages. These addresses are usually the local VA medical centers. Individual patients whose packages are returned to the medical center should be contacted by medical center staff so arrangements can be made for delivery or pick up of the packages.
 - Patients should be encouraged by VA Medical Centers (using VA staff, or local mass media if appropriate) to contact their local post office

to pick up mails and to arrange for a forwarding address.

- Patients should also be encouraged by local VAMC staff to contact their VA facility with any new forwarding address and/or contact information.
 - The CMOP program will work with the USPS to receive periodic updates on USPS delivery status. The status reports will then be shared with affected VA facilities as soon as it becomes available.
 - If necessary, the CMOP will work with other package delivery vendors to develop alternate means of assuring delivery of packages as circumstances allow, including possible return of those packages to CMOP and re-shipment via USPS if practical
3. The seven CMOPs each work directly through their local Post Office Customer Council and mail presort contractor (currently APX Shipping) to continually monitor and improve delivery of CMOP dispensed medication packages. CMOP package delivery to patients located across the nation averages three to four days from CMOP receipt to delivery to the patient's address. Every effort will be made to re-establish this level of service as soon after a disaster situation as practical.
4. In the event a VAMC is rendered inoperable such that the local electronic patient medication records can not be accessed, an central internet electronic share point will be created making basic medication profile information from the effected VA facility (or facilities) available, such as the patient name, social security number, diagnosis, medications, lab test results, from reinstated most recently archived back-up file data. Instructions will be circulated to VA personnel in VA facilities that are in proximity to the disaster area or those authorized VA representatives who may receive patients from the inoperable VAMC on how to access the information on the internet share-point site to minimize disruption and facilitate the ability to provide needed

medications to a VA patients from alternative locations.

5. As part of the early response to a disaster situation and/or in the event the local Post Office is inoperable, VA PBM representatives will work with emergency responders such as the Red Cross or VA Emergency response teams in the disaster area to establish a designated centralized shipping destination point within the effected area that patient medication packages could be shipped to for local pick-up if that is considered a practical alternative to provide need medication to VA patients.